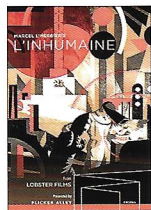


for maximum dramatic impact (*San Pietro* joined the National Film Registry in 1991). His final service film, *Let There Be Light* (1946), a powerful portrait of mentally and emotionally scarred men returning from battle, follows the treatment of soldiers suffering from “psychoneurotic” damage, what we today call post-traumatic stress disorder. It also shows black and white soldiers living and working together before the services were officially integrated (censored for 35 years, the film was restored just a few years ago). Extras include an introduction to the films, raw footage from *San Pietro*, and *Shades of Gray* (1948)—a remake of *Let There Be Light* with actors recreating scenes from the documentary. An important and provocative compilation of films capturing World War II history, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

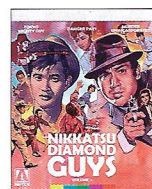
L’Inhumaine ★★★½
Flicker Alley, 122 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.95



The title of this 1924 silent film translates as *The Inhuman Woman*, who here is acclaimed singer Claire Lescot (played by real-life opera diva Georgette Leblanc), a woman who holds exclusive salon get-togethers in her mansion where an all-male guest list competes for her attentions. Claire enjoys the power she wields over the rich and powerful men of Paris society until she spurns young lovesick engineer Einar (Jaques Catelain), and the latter drives over a cliff to his death. The suicide shocks Claire out of her arrogance and threatens to destroy her career but what seems to be a tragic tale ultimately transforms into a romantic melodrama of jealousy, vengeance, and forgiveness. *L’Inhumaine* is a cinematic showcase for the modernism of its day, from the storytelling to the design of the sets. The animated opening credits (designed by painter Fernand Léger) describe it as “A fantasia by Marcel L’Herbier,” and the film features stunning mansions designed by architect Robert Mallet-Stevens, interiors by future filmmakers Alberto Cavalcanti and Claude Autant-Lara, costumes and decors by Paul Poiret, and a magnificent fantasy of a modern laboratory, more spectacular than functional with its moving parts and electrical arcs zapping across the screen (designed and constructed by Léger). The melodrama of the story is simplistic but the imagery, designs, and cinematic brio are thrilling and the film is a landmark of early French cinema. This restored edition looks gorgeous and features color tinting as conceived by the director, along with a choice of two excellent new musical scores. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a booklet. A must for any serious silent film collection, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Nikkatsu Diamond Guys: Volume 1 ★★★

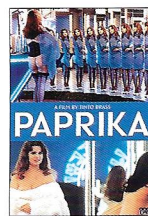
Arrow, 3 discs, 269 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$49.95



In the late 1950s, the Japanese film company Nikkatsu inaugurated a “Diamond Line” of genre films showcasing top stars. This first volume should especially appeal to aficionados of *film noir*, since two of the three films are in atmospheric black-and-white and favor typically unusual camera angles. Seijun Suzuki’s *Voice Without A Shadow* (1958), starring Hideaki Nitani as a reporter, is centered on a telephone operator who accidentally hears the voice of a killer with a very distinctive laugh; three years later, she’s convinced the laugh belongs to a business associate her husband brings home for dinner. And that’s only the start of this twisty tale. Toshio Masuda’s *Red Pier* (1958) is set in Kobe, where a suave young crook (Yujiro Ishihara) is targeted by both local mobsters and the cops after he witnesses a killing. The third film, Buichi Saitô’s *The Rambling Guitarist* (1959), shot in color and clearly aimed at the youth audience, stars Akira Kobayashi as a footloose, ultra-cool musician who takes a job with a mobster and then becomes romantically involved with the man’s lovely daughter. Ultimately, he will turn on his boss, occasioning a prolonged fight with a large gang in the headquarters nightclub. All are essentially exploitation movies, but have held up well and are surprisingly enjoyable, overall. Extras include interviews with Japanese film historian Jasper Sharp on Nitani and Ishihara, stills galleries, and a booklet with essays. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Paprika ★★★

Cult Epics, 116 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



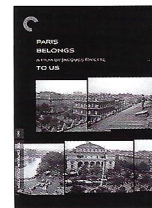
Italian filmmaker Tinto Brass’s name has become synonymous with bawdy cinematic sex since the mid-1970s, when he leapt from the avant-garde to borderline hardcore with *Salon Kitty* and actual hardcore with the big-budget *Caligula*. Subsequent years saw Brass become a full-fledged skin auteur, albeit one with style. *Paprika*, a 1991 adaptation of John Cleland’s 1748 erotic novel *Fanny Hill*, shifts the original story from 18th-century England to post-WWII Italy, following a young woman (Debora Caprioglio) whose temporary job working as a prostitute unexpectedly becomes a lifelong profession. Given the name “Paprika” by the madam at her first brothel, she learns the ways of the trade while travelling from brothel to bordello across the country and, eventually, the world. *Paprika* is a bombastic

sex comedy, over-the-top and cartoonish, as are the film’s characters—who are loud, garish, and proud of their sexuality (with the Italian filmmaker’s penchant for prosthetic penises). Brass wraps the soft-focus action in colorful, exquisitely framed shot sequences and set-pieces (imagine Federico Fellini directing porn), but underneath the sexy spectacle lies a harsh social critique. *Paprika* sees firsthand the degradation, misogyny, violence, and misfortune that accompanies her profession, directly from pimps and johns, and indirectly from the church and government. It’s a dangerous life, but *Paprika* manages to rise above the fray to harness and use her talents to her advantage, giving the film an oddly affirming message. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a lobby card video gallery. Recommended for collections with classic erotica. (P. Morehart)

Paris Belongs to Us

★★★

Criterion, 141 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



This 1961 debut feature from the late French New Wave founding member Jacques Rivette makes its American home video debut in a beautiful Criterion edition. Long overshadowed by fellow filmmakers Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer, and others, Rivette’s idiosyncratic, collaborative films have generated renewed interest with the recent releases of his epic *Out 1* and playful *Le Pont du Nord*, and viewers can see the birth of his themes and preoccupations in *Paris Belongs to Us*. Anne (Betty Schneider), a small-town girl attending school in Paris, becomes involved in a theater group led by the passionate but broke Gérard (Giani Esposito), whose rehearsals for *Pericles* must keep finding new spaces as cast members drop out. Anne is also introduced to a vague and vast international conspiracy by American-in-exile Philip (Daniel Crohem), a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who is fleeing the blacklist. The film hopscoches through Paris (some rehearsal spaces are marvelous little pockets hidden in the city) and spirals around itself while Anne plays detective searching for a missing musical recording, the last work by a deceased Spanish guitarist. Where other films of the New Wave look to the future, this is an accomplished, engaging, fascinating portrait of Paris at the end of the 1950s as the arts seem mired in tradition, and political and social energy is suppressed at all levels (also look for filmmakers Claude Chabrol and Godard in small roles). A minor classic, newly restored, extras here include Rivette’s 1956 short film *Le coup du berger*, an interview with film historian Richard Neupert, and an essay by critic Luc Sante. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)